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# Aphorisms of the Three Threes.



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Aphorisms of The Three Threes.



# APHORISMS

## OF THE THREE THREES

BY

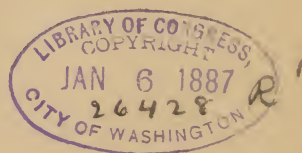
EDWARD OWINGS TOWNE ✓

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*An Aphorism is the sum of a long reflection; a sentence embodying a deep thought; a few words conveying a worthy sentiment.*

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(1886)

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1886,  
BY EDWARD OWINGS TOWNE,



THIS little book derives its name—Aphorisms of The Three Threes,—from the fact that its contents, for the most part, are made up of the utterances of the members of a small south side club called The Three Threes,—an association of nine well known business and professional gentlemen of Chicago, who dine together, at stated intervals, in the club rooms of a down town restaurant. At these meetings, held “every ninth night after the first night of each and every of the nine months following the ninth month of the year,” called “Ninth Night Banquets,” it is the custom of the members, “seated in threes at three three-legged tables,” to spend the entire evening in discussions upon such topics as suggest themselves, or may be called out by the events of the day. From these after-dinner conversations the aphorisms of the following pages have been gathered by the writer, to whose habit of noting down such observations of his friends as seemed to him to be particularly original, witty, sparkling or just, he owes it that he is able to present to the reader a volume which he hopes may not prove to be altogether unentertaining or uninstructional.



# APHORISMS OF THE THREE THREES.

I



MAN'S worth may usually be measured by the number of sacrifices he has made.

2

It is not in being deceived that we are pained; it is in being undeceived.

3

If you would hear a wise man speak like a fool, get him to talk about his children.

4

It is a question, frequently, whether the remembrance of our joys or of our sorrows furnishes us with the more satisfactory recollections.

5

Soft words strike hard blows.

6

He that goes into debt makes himself the slave of the future.

7

A woman never sincerely hates a man whom she has not loved.

8

How wise we would all be, could we but recall, upon occasion, the thoughts we have forgotten.

9

How quickly one forgets the things that move him most. How quickly a face vanishes into a dream. How quickly a love becomes a memory.

10

He argues best who never contradicts.

11

Women write as they dress—to be admired.

12

Our best wish for our friend would be—not that he might never have a disappointment, but—that he might never have a disappointment that might not be for his good.

13

He that is prone to construe to his own disadvantage every look and word of his neighbor passes sentence upon himself as meriting the supposed criticism. For he that looks for censure will seldom fail to find it, and kind fortune has so ordered, that the occasion will be rare when he will not merit what he gets.

14

To be happy, make others happy.

15

Arm wit with sneers and you have sarcasm.

16

The most selfish man is not always selfish. Let no one plume himself on a single good action.

17

The greater part of the business of society is small talk. He that takes anything to heart, said in gossip, is foolish.

18

People of equal mental capacities are always mutually attracted. Thus a fool is never so happy as when surrounded by an hundred others.

19

Patience is the noblest form of courage.

20

He that has many faults has few excuses;  
he that has few, has many.

21

Youth is the time of choice; old age is  
moral or vicious by habit.

22

Poverty is the usual heritage of the son of  
the father, *who was ever the poor man's  
friend.*

23

Woman plays the greatest havoc with the  
mildest weapons. She has been known to  
sink a navy with a tear, to scatter an army  
with a smile, to buy a world with a caress.

24

To be kind is to be wise.

25

Age is not experience: some men are old at thirty, others young at sixty years.

26

From childhood the world constantly becomes narrower until it reaches a point in death.

27

Women are more apt to fall into love with men that pretend to love them than with those that really do. To one who loves with his whole heart, the issue of his suit is so momentous, that he stands but an unequal chance with his skillful, fearless rival, upon whom failure can entail no more serious consequences than the soon forgotten pangs of wounded vanity.



28

There is always luck in a little ill-luck.

29

The really unfortunate victims of drink are the drunkard's friends.

30

The years dim the eyes of those that love, that age may see no wrinkles in the dear familiar face.

31

If you would have a woman think you perfect, accuse yourself of faults which you do not possess. If you are charitable and kind-hearted, confess with penitence that your most grievous sin is selfishness. She will quickly take up the cudgels for you to defend yourself against yourself, and will soon, in her earnestness, become blind to those faults which you really have.

32

Our fears furnish our hopes with wings.

33

An atmosphere of applause is the paradise of fools.

34

Men are more frequently jealous from pride than from love.

35

How few the friendships that endure, when to be faithful is to incur reproach and shame.

36

Notwithstanding professions of friendship, no prudent man will believe that a man who was once his enemy has become sincerely his friend.

37

Every friend multiplies myself.

38

The dead are lonely in winter. Grief freezes as well as love.

39

To make a fool your enemy is, frequently, to make a wise man your friend.

40

If a man wrote all his thoughts in a book the best name he could give it would be—  
*A Volume of Confessions.*

41

We find more generous poor men than generous rich ones. The poor are generous from sympathy; the rich, too frequently, from pride.

42

There is a laughter sadder than tears.

43

The dishonest man's most skillful antagonist is himself.

44

Nothing increases our respect for a man so much as to see him respected by others.

45

There are virtues that, adhered to too strictly or carried too far, become vices.

46

The presence of poverty softens the heart; the presence of death renders it humble.

47

What a home of follies the human heart would be, did not one drive out another!

48

Repentance is God's fire for refining souls.

49

He that pockets an insult usually thereby pockets money.

50

Every public work of a great city should be a work of art.

51

He who thinks he needs it not, stands most in need of experience.

52

The more men deceive others, the more they deceive themselves.

53

For the majority of men, it is pleasanter to read modern criticisms than old plays.

54

Our hopes end in—*hopes.*

55

If you would see a plain woman beautiful,  
put love into her eyes.

56

Since the world began, a good dinner has  
ever made a wise man happy.

57

When a vice wishes to disguise itself, it  
almost always assumes the garb of its op-  
posite virtue.

58

The chief use, at the present day, of the  
jury (an ancient relic of times when people  
hanged witches and ate without forks) is to  
delay justice and render litigation uncer-  
tain and expensive.

59

If sin be beautiful it is no longer sin.

60

The older the bachelor, the younger he wants the lady to be.

61

The child is like the narrow man; the narrow man is like the child.

62

Terror and joy are not altogether strangers. Love frequently surprises them in very close company.

63

He who never fails in an undertaking is, usually, of a soul so narrow that it can be of little consequence to the world whether he succeeds or does not succeed.

64

Great virtues magnify little vices.

65

Pity for others is courage; pity for ourselves, cowardice.

66

Praise, though deserved, is mere flattery, if he who yields it hopes thereby to benefit himself.

67

An engrossing vanity will not brook jealousy; but a jealous man is always somewhat vain.

68

The most ordinary life, were its secrets fairly written out, would read very like a romance.



69

Wit is wisdom's playground.

70

One can hear everything at a watering place, except people saying their prayers.

71

The majority of people, it would seem, spend half their youthful days striving to render their old age miserable.

72

The truth concerning a contemporary can not be known; invariably, his friends make him better, his enemies worse, than he is.

73

The pain occasioned by a request granted too late is greater than the pain occasioned by a request denied.

74

Love is the key of heaven.

75

It is difficult to be witty in the presence of those we fear.

76

The slave for whom there is the least hope of freedom is the slave of an idea.

77

We frequently show a consideration for two, in company, which we would bestow upon neither, if alone.

78

No man is so great that he can borrow no lustre from his friends; no man so low that he may not be further dishonored by his associates.

79

A mistake can never be wholly rectified.

80

An unhappy childhood embitters a whole life.

81

They that govern by fear are themselves governed by passion.

82

Not he whom men deem successful is to be envied, but he that has a happy, virtuous and contented heart.

83

The road of vice is a complete circle. He that travels upon it is constantly shaking hands with the same old landlords and being bitten by the same old dogs.

84

Memory is a good staff, but a poor sword.

85

Most follies die of their own extravagancies.

86

Passionate memories are sometimes more powerful than present emotions.

87

That which we have long expected frequently comes when we are least prepared to receive it.

88

The question most often on a woman's lips, in addressing her lover, is . . . . *Are you sure that you love me?* The thing about love that a woman would last part with is . . . . *love's protestations.*

89

Smiles and tears are very near relatives.

90

We more readily forgive grave faults that do not injure us, than slight ones that do.

91

Of pride and interest, pride is the greater liar.

92

If you would flatter a man, *remember his face*; if you would wound him, *forget his name*.

93

There is a sad infinity, called the world, in which a man can never distinguish true from pretended friends, except he have the misfortune of being covered with calumny and reproach.

94

More faults have been cured by ridicule than by reason.

95

We answer the questions we put to ourselves with shrugs.

96

We trust nothing so fondly as hope; yet nothing has so often deceived us.

97

A bad system of art usually receives its death blow from the devotion of its followers.

98

The height of a man's monument, dead, is usually in exact proportion to the length of his purse, living.

99

He may be bold for a cause that is timid for himself.

100

Philosophy frequently reiterates what wit has better said before.

101

The most disgusting affectation is the affectation of being unaffected.

102

A gentleman is a man who respects himself and has a heart solicitous for the welfare of others.

103

How many faults, that before we did not perceive, we are able to find in the man that has slighted us.

104

They that tell lies should have long memories.

105

If we seek more than one woman's love we deserve none.

106

Almost every vice can be shown to have had its origin in some other vice.

107

None are so foolish as those that preceded you; none so wise as those that come after you.

108

The difference between love as a passion and love as a sentiment is almost as great as the difference between love and hate.



109

The guilty conscience discovers a punishment in every misfortune.

110

There is nothing so honest as prejudice—and nothing so fatal to honesty.

111

To have an opinion is to be unpopular; to have no opinion is to be contemptible.

112

One should in youth practice the virtues of old age, if he would in old age enjoy the delights of youth.

113

When one has learned to boast so gracefully as not to offend his neighbors, he has mastered a useful art.

114

Success makes men daring; fortune favors daring men.

115

Cruelty for a moment is sometimes kindness for a lifetime.

116

The greatest harm that some men can do a woman is . . . . *to love her.*

117

If we would win confidence, we must seem to bestow confidence. Diplomacy has no deeper secret.

118

In order to judge a man we should know not only what others think of him, but what he thinks of himself.

119

In all change there is a tendency to the better.

120

It is impossible to think well of a man and ill of his friends.

121

The woman whose virtue does her the least honor is the homely woman.

122

Nothing will bring thoughts of ourselves so quickly to mind as to hear others talk of themselves.

123

When fortune lacks other materials for making a successful man, she seizes upon her favorite's blunders.

124

Vices, more readily than virtues, become habits.

125

We think of death as near to every one but ourselves.

126

He that utters the noblest sentiments does not always lead the best life.

127

The generosity of the man that gives, in order that he may receive, is mere greed.

128

Men are prone to imagine that because some of the censure they receive is unmerited, it is all unjustly bestowed.

129

A handsome face is usually an index of a good heart.

130

Poverty is an anchor many times; but oftener, a millstone.

131

He that marries to please his fancy, usually repents to satisfy his judgment.

132

Our lives, in great part, are made up of events that ordinarily would not occur.

133

He is not so much to be pitied who has misfortunes, as he that is unable to turn them to account, or bear them with patience.

134

We frequently drink, not that we want wine, but wit.

135

The things that cost most are the things that are given to us.

136

There is no character which interest plays so often as that of disinterestedness.

137

If Christianity were not the true religion its ministers would have killed it long ago.

138

Sad as it may seem, love, with the majority of mankind, is a mere habit, engendered and fostered by associations, circumstances, and conveniencies; circumscribed and limited by the possibilities of prosperity or adversity, thrift or unthrift, success or failure.

139

The really good are those who are good unconsciously.

140

The family of the vices is noted for the misery of its children.

141

Having forgiven our faults, we find fault with others . . . for being less kind.

142

It is some time after we have ceased to love that we give up the pretense of loving.

143

No man should be judged by an absolute standard of morality. The practices of the age in which he lives, the habits of the people by whom he is surrounded and a thousand considerations of tastes, motives, circumstances, and conditions, should enter into the account and affect the decision.

144

A man's life is half over before he learns how to live.

145

The rejected lover finds his greatest consolation in the belief that he—*can never again be happy.*

146

He can not have good manners who has not self-possession. Self-possession is the first quality of a gentleman.

147

The most untiring and ceaseless talkers in the world are the man who makes *a long story short*; the minister, who says *a few words by way of conclusion*; the lawyer, who tries *to be as brief as possible*; and the woman, who has *just a minute to stay.*



148

It is easier to conquer an "*I will*," than an "*I will not*."

149

However unworthy the object, love ennobles the lover.

150

He that profits by conversation will, ordinarily, listen but to so much of what is said as will furnish him with the cues of his own reflections.

151

If the Devil were to write a novel, his hero would be a bad man subsequently reformed. His Majesty would follow him through all the intrigues of vice with intensest sympathy and interest; when he became good . . . . *and married* . . . . the story would end.

152

Malice can not go into details without unmasking itself.

153

By hating a man we confess a certain admiration for him.

154

Time creeps for the lender but flies for the borrower.

155

It is less difficult to remember what others have said than to remember what we ourselves have said.

156

Flattery is an instrument that every man of the world should know how to use. The most cunning and irresistible flattery, at the proper time, is silence. The most skillful flatterer is he who listens well.

157

Few would do evil did they not expect that from evil good would come.

158

The cords with which love binds two hearts together are exceeding strong! We may say, "Ah! ah!" and—"It is over." We deceive ourselves. The bonds are not all broken—some of them remain . . . . and must sever one by one . . . . and days and months and years must aid . . . . to loosen and decay!

159

Most people that write verses give as a reason for the belief that they possess talent, that *they do it so easily*. Truly . . . ., for it is possible to write a thousand lines of verse and not give expression to a single worthy thought. They that write should remember that mere sound, in composition, is like foam upon the water, beautiful . . . . *but nothing floats upon it.*

160

Those who listen most attentively are frequently most bored.

161

In youth we long for the fame of the future; in age we sigh for the happiness of the past.

162

To-day is a substance; to-morrow a dream. To-day is youth and strength and glory; to-morrow old age and feebleness and shame. To-day is life; to-morrow death. To-day is time; to-morrow eternity. *O Man! seize the present, seize to-day, lest to-morrow, the iron-handed, seize you!*



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